



***Pseudancistrus corantijniensis*, a new species from the Guyana Shield (Siluriformes: Loricariidae) with a molecular and morphological description of the *Pseudancistrus barbatus* group**

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Abstract

Pseudancistrus corantijniensis is described based on specimens captured in the Corantijn River in Suriname. It is diagnosed by a particular arrangement of whitish spots, very small in the anterior three quarters of the head and large from the posterior part of the head to the caudal peduncle. As indicated by our molecular phylogeny based on mitochondrial D-loop sequences, *P. corantijniensis* is a member of the *Pseudancistrus barbatus* group comprising Guyanese derived *Pseudancistrus* bearing hypertrophied odontodes along the snout and nonevertible cheek plates. Other members of this group are *P. barbatus*, *P. depressus* and *P. nigrescens*. The closest relative to the new species is *P. nigrescens*, while *P. barbatus* and *P. depressus* are sister species. The known distribution range of each of the four members of the *P. barbatus* group is disjoint. A key is provided for the identification of the four members of the *P. barbatus* group.

Key words: Armored catfish, Guyanas region, Suriname, endemic, D-loop phylogeny, Corantijn

Introduction

Rivers of the Guyana Shield host a highly diverse freshwater ichthyofauna with many endemic species. The Loricariidae, or suckermouth-armored catfishes, forms a significant part of this diversity with many species and even genera restricted to this Neotropical region. New loricariid species inhabiting the Guyana Shield are still frequently discovered and described (e.g. Armbruster, 2003, 2004a, 2005). The genus *Pseudancistrus* is almost exclusively found in rivers of the Guyana Shield in Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, southeastern Venezuela, and northern Brazil. According to a recent revision of the genus (Armbruster 2004a), *Pseudancistrus* includes 14 nominal species that share no uniquely derived diagnostic characters, but can be characterized by a combination of osteological features like the absence of suture between pterotic-supracleithrum and hyomandibula, and the absence of contact between the hyomandibula and prootic, among others. Since then, two additional species have been described (Lujan *et al.*, 2007).

The classification of *Pseudancistrus* within the Loricariidae has been puzzling due to the intermediate state of one of the most noticeable morphological traits found in many species in the family, the ability to erect the cheek plates. In his description of *Pseudancistrus*, Bleeker (1862) placed this genus as well as *Plecostomus* (= *Hypostomus*) outside of all other Plecostomiformes (= Hypostominae) due to the inability to erect the cheek plates. In his classification, Isbrücker (1980) followed this criterion and placed *Pseudancistrus* as a member of his Hypostominae comprised of species unable to erect their cheek plates. Schaefer (1987), alternatively, placed *Pseudancistrus* in the Ancistrinae, a subfamily containing many species with evertible cheek plates. Schaefer (1987) diagnosed Ancistrinae on the basis of four uniquely derived character states associated